



Review: Freedom: Art as the Messenger

Billy Binion

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A girl cartwheeling on the beach. A row of sidewalk newspaper vending machines. A man sitting alone in a subway car, a bright red MAGA beanie atop his head. These images are all part of *Freedom: Art as the Messenger*, the Cato Institute's first art exhibit. Currently on view in Washington, D.C., it aims to explore the importance and complexity of American freedom—even as that word's definition seems to continually morph into something new.

Whether the exhibit suffers or benefits from the absence of image captions is up to the individual viewer. The pieces range from the direct (a photograph of the Lincoln Memorial, for instance) to the abstract (an acrylic painting of Life Saver candies). The former is one of the more iconic symbols of American exceptionalism, whereas the latter's relevance appears limited to the fact that it's an American brand.

Perhaps that's the point. With a vast swath of images and characters brought to life by a diverse set of artists, Cato's exhibit shows that freedom—our ability to act and transact as we please—is ubiquitous in American life, filling in cracks and crevices not always immediately visible to the naked eye.